

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BONN 16487 01 OF 03 081812Z
ACTION SS-25

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-----022572 081817Z /42

R 081756Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1736
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USLO PEKING
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USBERLIN
USNMR SHAPE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 16487

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, UR, GW, US
SUBJECT: FRG-SOVIET RELATIONS: THE CURRENT VIEW FROM
BONN

REFS: A) BONN 14363 (NOTAL); B) MOSCOW 19341 (NOTAL);
C) STATE 202818 (NOTAL); D) BONN 15499 (NOTAL);

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E) BONN 9179 (NOTAL)

1. DURING THE FOUR MONTHS SINCE BREZHNEV'S VISIT TO THE
FRG THERE HAS BEEN NO FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN THE SOVIET-
GERMAN RELATIONSHIP BUT THERE HAS BEEN AN IMPROVEMENT
IN ATMOSPHERICS, ESPECIALLY FROM THE SOVIET SIDE (REF B).
IT APPEARS THAT MOSCOW AND BONN ARE BOTH TRYING TO

PRESERVE THE STABILITY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WHICH THEY SOUGHT DURING THE BREZHNEV VISIT, WHILE CONTINUING TO PURSUE POLICIES WHICH DIVERGE AT LEAST AS OFTEN AS THEY OVERLAP.

2. AT PRESENT, THEREFORE, WE HAVE IN SOVIET-GERMAN RELATIONS NEITHER HOSTILITY NOR PROGRESSING DETENTE, BUT A CONTINUATION OF THE SUSPENDED ANIMATION IN WHICH NEITHER SIDE APPEARS PREPARED TO MAKE THE KINDS OF DECISIONS THAT WOULD BRING ABOUT REAL PROGRESS BUT BOTH SIDES REMAIN ANXIOUS TO KEEP THEIR OPTIONS OPEN AND MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE. NEITHER LEADERSHIP APPEARS READY TO PAY THE POLITICAL COSTS OF MAKING DECISIONS THAT WOULD BRING ABOUT A GREATER CONVERGENCE OF POLICY, AND NEITHER LEADERSHIP APPEARS READY TO SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES OF DETERIORATION.

3. AS WE REPORTED IN OUR ASSESSMENT OF BREZHNEV'S VISIT (REF E), THIS ATTEMPT TO SUBSTITUTE ATMOSPHERE FOR SUBSTANCE CAN GO ON FOR SOME TIME AND CAN SUSTAIN IF NOT A POSITIVE AT LEAST A POLITE SOVIET-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP. OUR READING OF GERMAN ATTITUDES, AS WELL AS GERMAN ESTIMATES OF SOVIET THINKING, SUGGESTS THAT THE SITUATION WILL CONTINUE FOR AT LEAST SOME TIME WITH THE PRINCIPAL VARIABLE REMAINING A POSSIBLE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT ON EITHER SIDE. A CAVEAT HERE IS THAT FURTHER REVELATIONS

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IN THEPACEPA SPY CASE, IF SUBSTANTIATED, COULD MAKE THE GOVERNMENT WARY OF CONTINUING THE WARM ATMOSPHERICS WITH MOSCOW.

4. WE HAVE SEEN NOTHING HERE TO INDICATE THAT THE CURRENT POSITIVE SOVIET MEDIA TONE ACCURATELY REFLECTS THE STATE OF GERMAN-SOVIET RELATIONS. FOREIGN OFFICE AND CHANCELLERY OFFICIALS READILY SUBSCRIBE TO THIS VIEW. ONE FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIAL NOTED THAT SOVIET PRAISE OF THE FRG IS OFTEN LINKED TO THE BREZHNEV VISIT. HOWEVER, THE INITIAL SOVIET COMMENTARY ON THE BREZHNEV VISIT DID NOT APPROACH THE HEIGHT OF RHETORIC NOW BEING REACHED AND THE GERMANS STRESS TO US THAT THERE WAS NOTHING IN THAT VISIT OR SINCE WHICH COULD OBJECTIVELY ACCOUNT FOR THE EUPHORIC TONE COMING OUT OF MOSCOW.

5. THE GERMANS TELL US THAT THEY NOTE WITH PLEASURE GREATER SOVIET RESTRAINT IN PUBLICIZING THE STANDARD PROTESTS ON BERLIN MATTERS, BUT THEY KNOW OF NO CONCRETE CASES IN WHICH THE SOVIETS HAVE REALLY CHANGED THEIR

POLICY ON ANY SINGLE MATTER OF BONN-MOSCOW CONCERN. ONE
GERMAN OBSERVED-THAT "RELATIONS ARE GOOD"
BECAUSE THE SOVIETS SAY THEY ARE GOOD." IT REMAINS TO
BE SEEN WHETHER SOMETHING MORE WILL COME OUT OF THE
SEPTEMBER 11-12 MEETING OF THE GERMAN-SOVIET ECONOMIC

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
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EXDIS

COMMISSION OR OF THE SEPTEMBER 26 GENSCHER-GROMYKO
DINNER AT THE UNGA.

6. GERMAN ATTITUDES ON THE POSITIVE TONE OUT OF MOSCOW
REMAIN AMBIVALENT. THE GERMANS ARE PLEASED TO BE ON THE
RECEIVING END OF SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE STANDARD

SCOLDINGS AND LECTURING THEY USUALLY GET. EVEN WHILE
DEVOID OF SUBSTANCE, THE FAVORABLE TONES OUT OF MOSCOW

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ARE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN BONN'S OSTPOLITIK, SERVING
AS A KIND OF GREEN LIGHT FOR EASTERN EUROPEAN STATES
ANXIOUS TO INTENSIFY ECONOMIC TIES WITH THE FRG. ON
THE OTHER HAND, THE GERMANS DO NOT LIKE TO BE PRAISED
AS MODELS OF DETENTE AND CLOSE COLLABORATION AS AGAINST
THE ALLEGEDLY LESS PERCEPTIVE UNITED STATES. THEY KNOW
THEY CANNOT BENEFIT FROM BEING ISOLATED FROM THE UNITED
STATES, NOR CAN THEY CONDUCT AN INDEPENDENT DETENTE
POLICY.

7. IN FACT, THE DILEMMA THE FRG FACES IN THE CURRENT
SITUATION IS THE SOVIET SUGGESTION THAT THERE ARE NOW
DIFFERENT DETENTE POLICIES BEING PURSUED IN BONN AND
WASHINGTON. THE GERMANS WANT TO KEEP A PATH OPEN TO
MOSCOW, BUT THEY ARE LEERY OF DOING SO AT THE COST OF
DIFFICULTIES WITH THE UNITED STATES.

8. MEMBERS AND OFFICIALS OF THE GOVERNING SPD HAVE
SEVERAL TIMES TAKEN EMBASSY OFFICIALS TO TASK ON PRESS
REPORTS OUT OF THE US ABOUT THE ALLEGED "FINLANDIZATION"
OF THE FRG. THEY HAVE INSISTED THAT THEY ARE MAKING
NO CONCESSIONS TO THE SOVIETS BUT ARE PURSUING A POLICY
LINK AGREED AND COORDINATED BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND BONN.
THEY FEAR THE CHARGES OF "FINLANDIZATION" WILL BE USED
BY THE CDU/CSU OPPOSITION TO UNDERMINE CHANCELLOR
SCHMIDT'S COALITION. THE RECENT SENSATION ABOUT A
POSSIBLE SPY IN SPD LEADER BAHR'S OFFICE HAS DEMONSTRATED
TO THE SPD HOW QUICKLY THE ALLEGED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
GERMAN AND AMERICAN POLICY CAN BE USED BY THE OPPOSITION
AGAINST THE CHANCELLOR.

9. CONTRARY TO SOME ASSERTIONS, TWO SPD OFFICIALS AND
ONE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL HAVE ALSO TOLD US THAT

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BAHR GENUINELY CONCENTRATED ON HIS NOMINAL MISSION
DURING HIS TWO RECENT VISITS TO MOSCOW: TO PERSUADE
THE SOVIETS TO PARTICIPATE MORE ACTIVELY IN THE NORTH-
SOUTH DIALOGUE AND, IN PARTICULAR, IN WILLY BRANDT'S
COMMISSION. THEY SAID THAT BAHR'S
CONVERSATIONS WITH BREZHNEV WERE, ASIDE FROM THIS
POINT, DESULTORY AND THAT BAHR HAD THE

DISTINCT SENSE THAT HE WAS DEALING WITH A VERY SICK AND AGED MAN.

10. SPD OFFICIALS ARE SOMEWHAT PERTURBED AT EVIDENCE THAT THE SOVIETS ARE SETTING THEMSELVES UP TO DEAL WITH THE OPPOSITION IF IT SHOULD COME TO POWER. THEY HAVE NOTED AN INDIRECT SUGGESTION FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE THAT THERE MAY NOT BE A NEW SOVIET AMBASSADOR NOMINATED UNTIL AFTER THE OCTOBER HESSE ELECTION, "JUST IN CASE." IN ADDITION, THE SOVIETS, MUCH TO THE ANNOYANCE OF BONN, HAVE INSISTED THAT FRG-SOVIET POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS BE SCHEDULED IN LATE OCTOBER. THE GERMANS HAD HOPED TO HOLD THEM IN SEPTEMBER. THE GERMANS HAVE ALSO NOTED BREZHNEV'S FRIENDLY EXCHANGE WITH STRAUSS (WHO REPORTEDLY IS AWAITING AN INVITATION TO VISIT MOSCOW) DURING HIS VISIT HERE AND APPARENT EFFORTS BY SOVIET DIPLOMATS TO EXPAND THEIR CONTACTS WITH THE OPPOSITION.

11. FACING-RUSSIANSMILES THE GERMANS STILL DO NOT KNOW WHAT MOTIVATES MOSCOW. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND INTELLECTUALS HERE ATTRIBUTE THE SOVIET MEDIA TREATMENT OF THE FRG TO THREE PRINCIPAL REASONS:

-- FIRST, AND MOST OBVIOUS, THAT THE SOVIETS ARE PLAYING THEIR "GERMAN CARD" AS RELATIONS WITH THE US APPEAR TO SOUR. RECENT INTERVIEWS BY DEPARTING SOVIET AMBASSADOR FALIN (BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY) APPEAR TO HIGHLIGHT THIS THEORY.

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-- SECOND, THAT BREZHNEV LEFT BONN GENUINELY CONVINCED OF SCHMIDT'S DESIRE FOR PEACE AND THAT SOVIET POLICY REFLECTS BREZHNEV'S THINKING, INDEPENDENT OF OTHER ISSUES.

-- THIRD, THAT THE NEW SOVIET APPROACH TO BONN (AND, WE

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EXDIS

GATHER, PARIS) RESPONDS TO THE CURRENT CHINESE DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE IN EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE. CERTAINLY THE ALMOST PAVLOVIAN SOVIET DIATRIBE ON ANY MENTION OF CHINA HAS MADE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT HERE. (IF THE CHINESE WANT TO USE THE FRG AS ONE END OF A POLITICAL PINCER MOVEMENT AGAINST MOSCOW, THEY HAVE PICKED A SINGULARLY VULNERABLE AND UNSUITABLE INSTRUMENT.)

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12. GERMAN OFFICIALS AND EXPERTS ON SOVIET AFFAIRS SHARE THE COMMON IMPRESSION THAT BREZHNEV CAN NO LONGER DETERMINE SOVIET POLICY THOUGH HE CAN, AT LEAST, PREVENT CERTAIN THINGS FROM GOING AGAINST HIS WILL. THEREFORE, EVEN ASSUMING THAT BREZHNEV WANTS BETTER RELATIONS WITH BONN THEY ARE AT A LOSS TO SEE HOW FAR HE COULD GO IN SUCH A DIRECTION. AND, OF COURSE, THEY HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER BREZHNEV LEAVES THE SCENE.

13. THE GERMANS ALSO REMAIN UNCERTAIN WHETHER THE SOVIET UNION CAN STILL DELIVER IN THAT AREA WHICH HAS OFTEN BECOME THE POINT AT WHICH SOVIET AND WEST GERMAN INTERESTS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COINCIDE IN THE DETENTE ERA: FRG-GDR RELATIONS. THEY THINK THAT HONECKER'S APPARENTLY FORTHCOMING NEGOTIATING POSITION IN MAY RESULTED FROM SOVIET GUIDANCE AFTER THE BREZHNEV VISIT. HOWEVER, THEY HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT REPORTS THAT MOSCOW HAS DECIDED THE TWO GERMANIES MUST HENCEFORTH NO LONGER BE PERMITTED TO COME TOO CLOSE TO EACH OTHER. IF THIS IS TRUE, THEY FEAR, ONE OF THE POLITICAL SALEABLE BENEFITS OF DETENTE WOULD BE REDUCED.

14. NONETHELESS, THE GERMANS MUST KEEP THEIR LINES OPEN TO THE EAST. THEY, OF COURSE, HAVE IMPORTANT INTERESTS IN DOING SO E.G., BERLIN, EMIGRATION OF ETHNIC GERMANS, TRADE AND THE FACT THAT MOSCOW RETAINS THE KEY TO GERMAN RELATIONSHIPS THROUGHOUT EASTERN EUROPE, PARTICULARLY THE GDR. IN ADDITION, AN SPD OFFICIAL HAS TOLD US THAT THE GERMANS FEEL THEY CANNOT AFFORD TO HAVE DETENTE DESTROYED COMPLETELY IF US-SOVIET RELATIONS GO GENUINELY SOUR. THAT SAME OFFICIAL, AND ANOTHER AS WELL, HAS TOLD US THE GERMANS ARE PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN CONDUCTING THEMSELVES IN A WAY THAT WILL REDUCE THE

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SOVIET TEMPTATION TO CRACK DOWN HARD ON THE EAST EUROPEAN SATELLITES. THE GERMANS FEAR THAT SUCH SOVIET REACTION MIGHT FOLLOW THE RECENT CHINESE CAMPAIGN, AND THEY WANT TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO PREVENT SOVIET FEARS FROM RISING TOO HIGH. ON THE OTHER HAND, HOWEVER, THE GERMANS CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN RELATIVELY TOUGH POSITIONS IN INTERNAL NEGOTIATING FORA SUCH AS MBFR. IF THEY ARE NOT GETTING ANYTHING OUT OF MOSCOW, THEY AT LEAST SEEM DETERMINED TO GIVE NOTHING AWAY.

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